United Nations A/ES-10/PV.36

General Assembly
Emergency Special Session

Official Records

36th meeting
Friday, 16 January 2009, 6.40 p.m.
New York

President: Mr. D'Escoto Brockmann ..... (Nicaragua)

The meeting was called to order at 6.55 p.m.

Agenda item 5 (*continued*)

Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Draft resolution (A/ES-10/L.21)

The President: In the light of information received from the Secretariat that Israel has asked for a vote and that there is no consensus on the text contained in document A/ES-10/L.21, and in accordance with rule 36 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, I have no alternative but to withdraw my sponsorship of draft resolution A/ES-10/L.21.

I now give the floor to the representative of Ecuador.

Ms. Espinosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): In response to your recent announcement, Mr. President, of your withdrawal of your sponsorship of draft resolution A/ES-10/L.21, I would like to inform you that my country, Ecuador, now wishes to assume sponsorship of the draft resolution. In addition, several other countries have joined Ecuador in co-sponsoring the draft resolution. Those countries are Venezuela, Indonesia, Malaysia, Syria, Algeria, Nicaragua and Senegal.

In that regard, we request that the General Assembly now proceed to take action without further delay on the draft resolution contained in document A/ES-10/L.21, taking into account solely the following revision to operative paragraph 1. I will read out the revision in English because the text initially circulated by the President of the General Assembly was in English.

(*spoke in English*)

> "Demands full respect for Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), calls for an immediate ceasefire and the immediate, unconditional withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, and calls for the unimpeded provision and distribution throughout Gaza of humanitarian assistance, including food, fuel and medical treatment."

The President: I call on the representative of Egypt on a point of order.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): Despite the fact that you announced, Mr. President, at the end of the last meeting here in the General Assembly that you would allow time for consultations that are going on between the European Union, Palestine and other countries, I see that you have chosen to give Ecuador the floor before me, even though I raised my flag earlier. I fully respect your judgement and your opinion, but I still believe that we already have an agreement among a large number of the members of the General Assembly on another text that has some amendments based on your guidance and based on the fact that you gave us half an hour, which has now been extended to one hour. I think it should be treated with respect.

Mr. President, you gave us the mandate and you gave us the time to negotiate, and now you are

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allowing for a move to take off on another track. I do not think that that is fair. As much as I always concur with your judgement, Sir, and as much as I always respect your opinion, I do not think that that is the right course to follow in this Assembly.

Mr. President, you gave us time to negotiate and we negotiated, and we reached agreement on a text. There were amendments — of course, we have to take everyone on board — but we have to come to a new consensus on this draft resolution. I am sure that we are not going to have consensus, because one party has asked for a vote anyway.

But this is an extraordinary practice that I am seeing today for the first time. I have served in this place for about 15 years over my entire career, and this is one of the rare times that I see the President authorizing Member States to go negotiate and come back with an agreement, and when we have the agreement, he provides an opportunity for other delegations to put on the floor another draft resolution that we know is not going to get more than 70 votes.

The President: I would ask the representative of Egypt to please hold his horses.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): Okay.

The President: The representative of Egypt accuses me of being disrespectful. Let me remind him that respect is a two-way street. I did not see him. I am never the one who sees anything going up. I get it in writing, and it is right here. I was reading from the notes, which call for Ecuador, so, please, I demand respect from the Permanent Representative of Egypt. He is accusing me without knowing what he is talking about.

Secondly, he said he needed time to negotiate. I do not know what he was negotiating. I said here, very frankly, to my brothers and sisters in the Assembly that the European Union has requested more time to talk about, I do not know, God only knows, what, and I gave it to them. So I did not know what I was to expect or what they were even doing there. I am talking about the European Union. I did not know that he was part of the European Union. So, please —

I am being told that the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic would like to take the floor.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): Mr. President, do not be upset. Do not be upset for the deadlock that has been reached after two days of intensive, in-depth, sincere discussions that you, Sir, as President of the General Assembly, have shepherded very capably, wisely and patiently with the purpose of arriving at a consensus. It is difficult, it is even impossible to do so, but you tried anyway. You tried, and we thank you for your efforts. You have attempted to arrive at an agreement over a text that, in principle, should represent to all a service that the international community is offering the wounded Palestinian people who have been butchered in Gaza.

Do not be upset, Father, who are honest and candid, because the battle of good against its enemies has always been the reason for our presence in this world. That battle is one that the forces of darkness and ignorance can never win regardless of their procrastination, lies and falsifications.

Do not be upset, Mr. President. You have dedicated yourself to being a role model for us all, and while we understand the reluctance of some, you have forced those who disagree with you — who are few among us — to respect you and hold you in high regard, even though some have tried to complicate your leadership of this session. We understand that differences of opinion do not upset good relations.

Mr. President, the truth of the matter is that you have reinstituted lost credibility to the conscience of this international organization. With your proud halo of humanness you have alleviated the pain of Gaza's innocents, its children, its women and its elderly, who are being burned alive by an Israeli war machine that leaves no human or stone unharmed.

I support the request of the Permanent Representative of Ecuador — indeed, I join her in her request — and I would like to adopt exactly what she has said, word for word. All of us must work in service of the Charter, and not simply find ways to circumvent or manoeuvre around it. As I have said before, people are dying. That is why some of us are asking for more time.

But we can wait no more. The Israeli beast is preying upon innocents in Gaza. The matter is one of moral principles and not one of negotiating over this term or that.

Mr. Palouš (Czech Republic): Speaking frankly, I would say that this conversation we have been having makes me very sad. I speak on behalf of the European

Union, and I would like to strongly support what the representative of Egypt has said. We have really worked hard, all day, to reach consensus on an important text. We worked hard with the Permanent Observer of Palestine. We worked hard to come up with a balanced text that really can reach consensus in this Assembly. So we hope that this text, which is now on your desk, Mr. President, will be considered in a proper procedural manner, and we are certainly ready to explain what is in it. I would like to announce that this text has the support of the whole of the European Union.

Mr. Khazaee (Islamic Republic of Iran): I do not want to go into detail. My delegation would like to support what has been said by the Permanent Representative of Ecuador, and I would like to inscribe the Islamic Republic of Iran as a sponsor of the draft resolution. I fully support the revision by the representative of Ecuador. In addition, what the Permanent Representative of Syria said reflected the facts.

I do not wish to go into detail or to explain this issue further; its urgency is clear to all of us here. As you said, Mr. President, every passing minute matters to the lives of the many innocent civilians, including women and children, in the Gaza Strip. Therefore, once again, my delegation fully supports the draft resolution co-sponsored by the representative of Ecuador. I would also like to request, Mr. President, that the Assembly take action on the draft resolution.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We wish to thank you most openly and sincerely, Mr. President, for your efforts to ensure that, at this emergency special session, the General Assembly can adopt a draft resolution that has the broadest possible support. You have acted transparently and have assumed responsibility for enabling the Assembly to exercise the authority entrusted to it by the Charter of the United Nations. Your role at this historic turning point will be recognized by posterity. You can be assured that your name will be recorded in the annals of modern history, because we are at a crucial moment when this body must express itself with equanimity and, above all, serve the interests of international peace and solidarity.

As all delegations are aware, this morning the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, when it officially presented the position of its Government, proposed a number of additions to the text that you introduced yesterday, Mr. President. Therefore, all delegations without exception had the opportunity to consult with their capitals and regional groups and to carefully study the text. That is why it should be put to the vote.

In that connection, I should like to recall that the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela proposed six amendments to the draft resolution. I wish to go over them, even though they are set out in the official document circulated by the presidency this morning, which sets out precisely in both Spanish and English the proposals of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. We officially submitted a number of amendments that, in our opinion, would enhance the draft resolution. For example, we demanded that the occupying Power, Israel, withdraw from the Gaza Strip and comply immediately and unconditionally with the provisions of Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). We also requested that the draft resolution include a demand for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli military forces from the Gaza Strip, as well as a demand that the occupying Power, Israel, lift the economic and military blockade imposed on the occupied territory of Gaza and immediately reopen border crossings into Gaza to permit humanitarian access and the free movement of persons.

The President: The representative of Algeria has requested the floor to speak on a point of order.

Mr. Benmehidi (Algeria): I apologize to the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela for having taken the floor.

I wanted to respectfully request, Mr. President, that you call on those delegations that are consulting within the Hall while the General Assembly is debating to show respect for the Assembly and to retake their seats.

The President: I kindly request the representatives of the different delegations not to obstruct the work of the General Assembly and, if they must engage in consultations, to have the minimal courtesy to do so outside.

I now ask the representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to please continue.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): Thank you very much,

Mr. President, for urging us to respect the rules that govern the functioning of this body.

The Venezuelan proposal also called on UNICEF and all other agencies concerned with humanitarian aid to establish a programme providing assistance to Palestinian children and adolescents affected by war trauma. Finally, we also requested that the resolution express support for the Human Rights Council resolution adopted on 12 January 2009, on the grave violations of human rights after the occupation of Palestine, including the recent occupation of the region of Gaza. However, I wish to officially report that the delegation of Venezuela has decided not to insist on those amendments, although we believe that some of them could enhance the text.

Therefore, we support the decision of the delegation of Ecuador to take over the President's text. We believe that that text represents a major effort and that the President acted appropriately and with dignity and decorum in giving delegations the opportunity, after consulting with their capitals and in regional groups, to speak about this draft resolution. Therefore, we welcome and enthusiastically support the draft resolution now co-sponsored by Ecuador and the revision that its representative read out in this forum.

The only difference, as members are already aware, is that Ecuador proposes a demand for the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Israeli forces illegally occupying Palestinian territory. The whole world is demanding this. The United Nations cannot carry out its humanitarian assistance as long as there is a land, sea and air occupation of the Palestinian people in Gaza.

To sum up, we believe that it is essential that this forum pronounce itself in favour of the immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Israeli army from the Gaza Strip. I would here like to appeal to the conscience of all delegations of the world, especially those of the Arab world and members of the Arab League, and I call on them — and I am speaking from the very heart of the people of Venezuela — to support this revision.

This is going to be noted in the records of this Organization for posterity. Who could agree that the Israeli occupying forces continue to commit their crimes against the Palestinian people? Who would support Israel's ongoing illegal occupation? This is a challenge to all countries. We would therefore like to lend our strongest support to the draft resolution now presented by the delegation of Ecuador, with the revision introduced.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I give the floor to the observer of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): Mr. President, I want to begin by reiterating for the 100th time the appreciation of the Palestinian people for your courageous and principled position in resuming this emergency special session and in trying very hard to reach a near-consensus on a draft resolution that will send the loudest possible message to Israel to the effect that almost the entire international community is united in demanding that it stop its aggression against our people immediately on the basis of resolution 1860 (2009).

I acted as your faithful son in following your instructions, Sir, and negotiating in good faith with a very important bloc in the United Nations — the Europeans — for the purpose not of giving Israel the gift of splitting the General Assembly, but of cornering it by having the entire General Assembly united in demanding compliance with resolution 1860 (2009), beginning with an immediate ceasefire.

In this connection, I want to thank everyone here, because all of them are supporting our heroic people in Gaza, who are fighting and spilling their blood because of the aggression of Israel against our people. We appreciate everyone's efforts. I do not see a split within the General Assembly, with the exception of Israel, which is the country that is refusing to comply with resolution 1860 (2009). In this connection, I thank my sister, the Ambassador of Ecuador, the European Union and you, Sir, especially, because you led this effort for a successful conclusion. That conclusion has to be successful.

I appeal to everyone in this room. What is needed is not two sides competing between themselves to show how faithful they are to the Palestinian people. We know that the Assembly is truly outraged about what is happening to our people, and we appreciate that position. We appeal to all members to support this text that the Assembly entrusted me with negotiating with the European group. I believe the text that we have reached with them, which does not fundamentally change the original text and is faithful to resolution 1860 (2009), which demands an immediate ceasefire, is a text that we can live with.

Of course, if it were up to us, we would want a very strong draft resolution that would demand many things. But for my part, I want to serve the interests of my people in Gaza well and try to stop this carnage and these atrocities committed by the Israelis against my people immediately, and that will require the unity of the entire General Assembly against Israel and for all of the small issues — and they are important issues — to be put aside.

On behalf of the Palestinian people, on behalf of our brothers and sisters in Gaza, I appeal to the Assembly to unite behind this text, which would then acquire almost total consensus, and to adopt it tonight in order to isolate Israel and not give it the gift of splitting the General Assembly over issues of who is more devoted to the Palestinian people and who is not. We are all concerned about the Palestinian people, and I appeal to the Assembly to accept this text, to put it to a vote and to adopt it by almost 190 votes. That would be the most forceful and most powerful message the Assembly could send to the Palestinian people. I hope we do it, and I hope we do it right now.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): We thank our brother from Palestine for his clear, brave and important statement.

(*spoke in English*)

I think we all heard that our brother from Palestine has requested an immediate vote and has asked for the widest possible support for the proposition that has been presented. We will therefore now proceed to an immediate vote.

I call on Egypt on a point of order.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): After that emotional call by the representative of Palestine in favour of the text that was negotiated between Palestine and the European Union and not in favour of the text that was presented by Ecuador and other delegations, I think that we have to apply our minds and our hearts in support of the Palestinian cause and in support of the text that was negotiated all day long with the European Union. I think that the text that Ambassador Mansour is asking for has been given to the Secretariat, and it is a full text covering all the aspects of the draft resolution based on the proposal that you, Sir, have withdrawn.

That is why I was the first to raise my flag. The fact that Ecuador was written in your notes, Sir, is not my concern. That has to do with your staff, who did not wait for the flags to be raised and wrote in your notes that Ecuador should be given the floor before me. Those are not the rules that apply in this Assembly.

With all due respect and humbleness, I ask you to support what was said by the representative of Palestine. We should put the text that was negotiated, which you allowed time for us to negotiate, to the vote. A full text has been given to the Secretariat. I would request the Secretariat to circulate that text to the members so that everybody knows that it is almost identical to the text that you presented, Sir, with some slight adjustments that have been made to obtain the 180 or 190 votes that the Ambassador of Palestine is looking for. Otherwise we may divide the General Assembly into many, many categories and then have Israel evade its responsibility and ignore all the measures that we are trying to achieve in this Assembly.

I therefore join the representative of Palestine in putting the draft resolution that was negotiated between Palestine and the European Union, with the participation of many other countries, to the vote first.

The President: It is my understanding that, in the event that the General Assembly is presented with two different proposals, it should obviously vote on the proposal that was presented first. I am saying that that is my understanding. That is what it is in the rules of procedure. Representatives may read it.

I call on the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Shaaban (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management): Rule 91 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly reads as follows:

> "If two or more proposals relate to the same question, the General Assembly shall, unless it decides otherwise, vote on the proposals in the order in which they have been submitted. The General Assembly may, after each vote on a proposal, decide whether to vote on the next proposal."

It is the Secretariat's view that the meaning of "unless it decides otherwise" here gives rise to two options: either to vote in accordance with the proposals made or, if that is challenged, to vote on which proposal is to be voted on first.

Ms. Espinosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I really must acknowledge that there is some confusion because we are being asked to decide on a new draft resolution that we are not familiar with and we do not really understand whether it is Egypt or the European Union that is presenting it. We do not have a text. With all due respect, I think that there is some confusion here.

The only draft resolution on which there is clarity on what we are discussing and that includes a revision that has been circulated is, to my understanding, that of Ecuador. Now, I would like to ask for a few minutes, because clearly Ecuador cannot take a decision on a draft resolution that it had presented with the agreement of other countries, which have not expressed their opinions on the issue.

Thus, Mr. President, I would request that you give us at least a few minutes. Ecuador makes this request so that we can consult the other countries that are sponsoring this draft resolution together with Ecuador.

With regard to the draft resolution of which the representative of Egypt is speaking, that request is appropriate, since we are not going to take a decision on a draft resolution that we are not familiar with or do not clearly understand where it comes from. In other words, who is presenting this draft resolution? Where is it? Not all members have had the opportunity to see that text, and I think we need the time to do so. Later, we can focus on the minutiae of procedure, such as who raised their flags first and so on. But I would like to remind you, Sir, that as soon as you said the word in English "withdraw", Ecuador immediately raised its flag. In addition, Ecuador will not respond to any kind of intimidation. I would like to ask with all due respect, Mr. President, that we be given the time, first of all, to see the draft resolution that we are supposed to decide on, with which we are not familiar, that we have not seen and are not even clear about who negotiated it.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The observations just made by the representative of Ecuador seem perfectly reasonable to me. I had no idea that members did not even have the text of the draft resolution that it is proposed we vote on. In any case, it appears to me proper that we should take some 10 minutes.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): I think we are a little overheated here. We are all working in the same direction in support of the Palestinian people. As we have already expressed before, what we need here in the General Assembly, given that the Security Council adopted resolution 1860 (2009) by 14 votes in favour with one abstention — with the latter party having announced in its explanation of vote that it was supportive of the provisions of the resolution — is something closer to unanimity.

I am not in dispute with my beautiful lady here, the Ambassador of Ecuador. We are running on the same course, but we are running on two different tracks. There is a confusion about which draft we are voting on.

So we ask that the Secretariat circulate first the draft resolution that has been given. The Ambassador of Ecuador has asked who is sponsoring this draft. This draft was negotiated between Palestine and the European Union, and as Palestine is not yet a full Member State, Egypt is presenting this draft on behalf of Palestine.

I would second Ms. Espinosa's request that we have a 10- or 15-minute break and then we will come back. I would also request that you, Mr. President, take that draft first and, pursuant to the text quoted by the Under-Secretary-General, "unless it decides otherwise", I formally move for a vote on that draft unless we reach a different agreement during this recess, and that we take this draft as a basis, since it is a draft that is going to get 180 votes in favour of the Palestinian people. We believe and we are greatly convinced that this draft is the best draft to adopt.

We thus accept Ms. Espinosa's proposal for a 15-minute recess or until this draft is distributed and until people understand that it contains exactly what is set down in the Ecuadorean draft. It contains almost the same language, but within a different context, and will be found acceptable to everybody in the Assembly.

Mr. Ripert (France) (*spoke in French*): I would simply like to say that I think we heard a very moving statement from the representative of Palestine. France does not need to present evidence of the efforts it has made with all its partners in the European Union to obtain a lasting ceasefire as soon as possible that will bring peace not only immediately in Palestine and Gaza, but to the entire region in the future. We should listen to the Palestinian Ambassador. The Ambassador

of Egypt, who has presented the text on behalf of Palestine, has perfectly summarized our thinking.

Mr. President, if you wish to suspend the meeting, you have the text and you can propose that the General Assembly vote on the European Union-Palestine-negotiated text. I would like you to do so very clearly on behalf of France. We could give dozens of speeches, but I think it is not worth it. It would be more appropriate to respond forthwith to the request made by the Ambassador of Palestine and then, following a brief suspension that would allow all delegations to obtain the text, which was given to the Secretariat almost an hour ago, to vote straight away on the text.

Mr. Palouš (Czech Republic): I just wanted to express support once again for the statement made by the Ambassador of Egypt. Actually, this text is nothing new and not a mystery; it is your text, Mr. President, that we have been working with. So I believe that the basis of this text is very similar to the one co-sponsored by the Ambassador of Ecuador. But this text can really attract a consensus, and we have acted on your instructions to bring the European Union fully behind it with all its power. Therefore, I hope that after the break, this text will be taken into consideration.

The President: If this text is so similar to the other one, why was it necessary?

Ms. Espinosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): This is simply a matter of procedure. People who have much experience and who have been here for many years know that a draft resolution cannot be voted upon when the one it is replacing has not been withdrawn. In other words, the draft resolution that was formally introduced and with which everyone is familiar, including the revision to its operative paragraph 1, is the one that Ecuador is proposing. We are not just going to say, "No, here we will vote on the draft resolution submitted by the European Union, which has been negotiated with Palestine and other countries". I simply want it established that the draft resolution that was introduced in the first place — I am following rule 84 of the rules of procedure, on voting — is the first draft resolution, which was introduced with the revision that was read out by my delegation. Another draft resolution cannot just appear and then be put to the vote. Here, we must follow the rules of procedure, and those rules must be adhered to by all countries, large and small.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): That is exactly what I said half an hour ago.

(*spoke in English*)

Let us not waste any more time, please. I shall now suspend the meeting for 15 minutes.

The meeting was suspended at 7.45 p.m. and resumed at 8.15 p.m.

The President: I am sorry, my dear brothers and sisters, but now the other group has requested a couple of minutes more, and I therefore suspend the meeting once again.

The meeting was suspended at 8.15 p.m. and resumed at 8.25 p.m.

The President: Is there any result to report to the Assembly?

Ms. Espinosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank you, Mr. President, for having given us these minutes — much less time than was given to the European Union — to discuss the amendments.

We have conducted consultations with countries that co-sponsored draft resolution A/ES-10/L.21, as orally revised by Ecuador, in order to hear the variety of voices, because we are persuaded that we must come here in the greatest spirit of cooperation and goodwill and, above all, thinking of the well-being of the Palestinian people.

Basically, Ecuador wishes to propose that we return to the original text. In order to reach an agreement, Ecuador is willing to withdraw its oral revision only if this proposal is accepted by Egypt and the European Union. In other words, we are proposing to vote on the original draft text as submitted. We are also proposing to withdraw the revision that Ecuador submitted with the support of several other countries, in order to reach the greatest consensus possible and, of course, heeding the requests of the representative of Palestine.

That is the position of Ecuador, and of course we would immediately call for a vote on the original text.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): If I understand my neighbour correctly, the group of sponsors of the revision that Ecuador proposed before we suspended still insist on voting on the original text, but without the oral revision.

In that regard, heeding the appeal of the representative of Palestine, following the discussions and informal consultations in which almost all those in this room have participated and bearing in mind the Palestinian cause and the need to ensure the largest possible number of votes in favour of the draft resolution that I presented, I make a motion, under rule 91 of the rules of procedure, that the draft resolution contained in document A/ES-10/L.21/Rev.1 be put to the vote before the draft resolution sponsored by Ecuador and other countries.

We believe that our draft resolution will garner 180 votes in favour. It is nearly identical to the draft resolution that the representative of Ecuador is pushing to the vote. Therefore, we believe that if we wish to advance the cause of the Palestinian people and to support an end to the attacks on the Palestinians, the provision of humanitarian assistance, a lifting of the blockade and full access to the Palestinian people, our draft resolution should be put to the vote first. I make a motion under rule 91 that we proceed to a procedural vote in that regard.

The President: The General Assembly now has before it two proposals: the proposal contained in document A/ES-10/L.21 and the motion by the representative of Egypt, who has requested that priority be given to his proposal.

I now give the floor to the Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management.

Mr. Shaaban (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management): For the record, rule 91 reads as follows:

> "If two or more proposals relate to the same question, the General Assembly shall, unless it decides otherwise, vote on the proposals in the order in which they have been submitted. The General Assembly may, after each vote on a proposal, decide whether to vote on the next proposal."

In accordance with rule 91, the General Assembly should first consider the draft resolution contained in document A/ES-10/L.21. However, in the light of the request by the representative of Egypt, the Assembly will first take a decision on his request for priority.

The President: I will first put to the vote the motion made by the representative of Egypt that priority be given to his proposal, contained in document A/ES-10/L.21/Rev.1.

We shall now begin the voting process. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Belgium, Benin, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Canada, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Dominica, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Guinea, Hungary, Iceland, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Maldives, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Panama, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Bolivia, Brunei Darussalam, Cuba, Ecuador, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Malaysia, Nicaragua, Syrian Arab Republic, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

Abstaining:

Barbados, Belize, Bhutan, Botswana, Côte d'Ivoire, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, India, Jamaica, Lesotho, Myanmar, Nepal, Niger, Pakistan, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, Yemen

The motion was adopted by 112 votes to 10, with 20 abstentions.

[Subsequently, the delegations of Malta and Tunisia advised the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour, and the delegation of Djibouti advised the Secretariat that it had intended to abstain.]

The President: I will now put to the vote the proposal by the representative of Egypt, contained in document A/ES-10/L.21/Rev.1. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Argentina, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cambodia, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Congo, Costa Rica, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Denmark, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gambia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Iraq, Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Lesotho, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Montenegro, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Swaziland, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Uganda, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, Nauru, United States of America, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)

Abstaining:

Australia, Canada, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Nigeria, Syrian Arab Republic

Draft resolution A/ES-10/L.21/Rev.1 was adopted by 142 votes to 4, with 8 abstentions (resolution ES-10/18).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Djibouti advised the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour; the delegation of Micronesia advised that it had intended to vote against; and the delegation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela advised that it had intended to abstain.]

The President: I call on the representative of Cape Verde on a point of order.

Mr. Lima (Cape Verde): I have a problem here. I voted, but my vote was not registered. When the Secretariat came to me, they told me that I had not paid my arrears and that that is why the name of my country does not appear on the board. I would like to ask the Secretariat why my name does not appear. I do not understand, because I did not receive the necessary letter from the Secretariat. Bangladesh, Afghanistan and the Comoros, which are on the same list as I am on, appear on the board. I do not understand. The Secretariat must explain to me why Cape Verde cannot vote while others that have not paid, like me, are voting. Something is wrong in the Secretariat, because I am sure we have paid.

The President: I now give the floor to the representative of the Secretariat.

Mr. Shaaban (Under-Secretary-General for General Assembly and Conference Management): On 16 January in the afternoon, the President read from his notes as follows,

> "Before proceeding further, I should like to inform members that, since the issuance of document A/ES-10/438, Afghanistan has made the necessary payment to reduce its arrears below the amount specified in Article 19 of the Charter."

It was decided that the Assembly took note of that.

In a letter dated 13 January 2009 from the Secretary-General to the President of the General Assembly, contained in document A/ES-10/438, there is a list of countries. Wherever there is an asterisk, it is explained at the end of the document that in resolution 63/4, the General Assembly decided that the Central African Republic, the Comoros, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Sao Tome and Principe, Somalia and Tajikistan should be permitted to vote in the Assembly until the end of its sixty-third session.

The President: I call on the representative of the Gambia on a point of order.

Mr. Faati (Gambia): My delegation requested the floor in order to raise a point of order. It relates to the fact that we voted on the draft resolution contained in document A/ES-10/L.21/Rev.1, which was based on the original draft resolution submitted by Ecuador. I think we set a precedent today which is not a good one in that a revised draft resolution has superseded an original. That is not the way things are done. In order to bring forth a revised draft resolution, a delegation must be a sponsor of the original. That did not happen in the case here. I just want to register that it is not a good precedent and I think that should be noted in future.

The President: I call on the observer of Palestine.

Mr. Mansour (Palestine): I want to thank members for succeeding in what they wanted to accomplish — an almost unanimous vote to pressure Israel to comply with resolution 1860 (2009), beginning with an immediate ceasefire that will stop the killing of our people and that will, of course, be followed immediately by total withdrawal from the occupied Gaza Strip.

We want to thank everyone, even our brothers and sisters who abstained. They abstained not because they objected to the contents of the draft resolution. They are part of the consensus in applying the pressure on Israel in order to isolate it so that it will comply with resolution 1860 (2009).

This evening I want to thank — on behalf of the Palestinian people and our brave people in Gaza — each and every representative who worked to accomplish this very powerful political message. And if Israel does not comply, we are going to do other things. We will go and knock on the door of the Security Council with a resolution based on Chapter VII, and we expect the Assembly to be with us, help us and support us until we bring an end to the aggression, achieve a total withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza and the siege against our people in Gaza is lifted and all border crossings are opened, in accordance with the Agreement on Movement and Access, especially the border crossings with Israel, because Israel is the one that is imposing a blockade against our people. We shall prevail with the support of the Assembly.

Tonight the Assembly has sent a very encouraging message to the brave people of Gaza in their fight to stop the aggression immediately. I wish to thank the Assembly and to congratulate members for accomplishing what they wished to accomplish.

The President: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to make statements in explanation of vote on the resolution just adopted.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): This is to specify without further explanation that Venezuela was convinced that most members of the Assembly would vote in favour of the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip. In that case, and having noted that there was a majority in favour of the draft resolution submitted by Egypt, which changes the draft resolution submitted by the President in some parts, I would like it placed on record that the delegation of Venezuela abstained from voting given the circumstances.

Mr. Moreno Fernández (Cuba) (*spoke in Spanish*): My delegation would have preferred the formula originally proposed by the delegation of Ecuador. In Cuba's opinion, that formula was closest to the position adopted by the countries of the Non-Aligned Movement with regard to the dreadful situation in Gaza. In fact, we would have preferred the original text submitted by you, Sir. For that reason, we voted against giving priority to the draft resolution presented by the representative of Egypt. Nevertheless, despite those preferences and to demonstrate our continuing solidarity with the Palestinian people and with the cause of Palestine and our firm condemnation of the continuing aggression by Israel in the Gaza Strip, we voted in favour of resolution ES-10/18.

Finally, I wish to congratulate you, Sir, and to thank you for your unstinting efforts and your dedication, which have been evident in all of the

actions taken by the General Assembly over the past few days.

Mr. Khazaee (Islamic Republic of Iran): I would like to express my delegation's congratulations to you, Sir, on your hard work and your great leadership. We admire your noble sense of responsibility and sympathy for the innocent people of Gaza. What you have done so far is indeed a true reflection of the vote of conscience and public opinion. It was our sincere hope that, under your exemplary leadership, this meeting could adopt a stronger resolution condemning the criminal acts of the Israeli regime and forcing an immediate end to that aggression and massacre in order to compensate for the inadequate action of the Security Council on the matter.

Regrettably, since the adopted resolution was not what it expected, my delegation abstained in the voting. I would like to reiterate the principled position of my Government and my people that the root cause of the current situation in the occupied Palestinian territory, especially in the Gaza Strip, is the occupation of that territory by the illegitimate Israeli regime. In our view, as long as that problem is not addressed and the Palestinian people are not able to fully exercise their right to self-determination, any hope for durable peace and stability in the region will be no more than a futile wish.

Ms. Eilon Shahar (Israel): Many speakers during this open and endless tenth emergency special session have excelled at rhetoric, but less at reality. In reality, it is known that Israel engaged in this conflict against its will. You, members of the General Assembly, know well that Israel had no choice, as you would not either if the lives of your people were at stake. You well know that you would not place a mere resolution over the heads of your men, women and children to protect them from unrelenting terrorist attacks.

Furthermore, as we stated at the opening of this session, Article 12, paragraph 1, of the United Nations Charter prohibits the General Assembly from making recommendations as the Security Council remains actively seized of the matter.

In addition, the resolution before us is deeply flawed and flagrantly one-sided. It makes no mention that Hamas and its terrorist cronies launched thousands of rockets and mortars at one million Israeli civilians. It makes no mention that Hamas uses schools, hospitals, mosques and civilians' homes to hide weapons and launch attacks. It makes no mention of Hamas's enormous efforts to smuggle sophisticated arms into the Gaza Strip. These and other omissions make this resolution irrelevant, as it clings to a distorted reality.

Sadly, there is an ever-widening gap between what happens in the real world and the reaction here, on First Avenue. This is a deeply troubling discrepancy which calls into question the relevance of our work and the effectiveness of our response. While this body considers a resolution steeped in prejudice, Israel and many others in the region are actively engaged in seeking to bring about conditions on the ground that will enable a solution.

While many in this Hall find great satisfaction in empty denunciations, true progress is made on the ground. Terrorism is a destructive, evil plague. Fighting terrorism is a value enshrined by the United Nations and the entire international community. As such, Israel expects support against the relentless terrorist onslaught of Hamas and other groups. If the General Assembly truly desires to unite for peace, and not only in name, let us unite for peace and unite against terrorism.

For that reason I just stated, we find the resolution before us procedurally and substantively flawed, and that is why we voted against it.

Mr. McNee (Canada): Canada continues to call for an immediate, sustainable and durable ceasefire. We support this resolution's call for compliance with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) as a means to achieve such a ceasefire. However, Canada regrets that the resolution fails clearly to recognize that rocket attacks by Hamas led to the current crisis. The rocket attacks must stop. For this reason, Canada abstained in the vote on the resolution.

Mr. Palouš (Czech Republic): I speak on behalf of the European Union (EU).

The European Union has tonight voted in favour of the resolution supporting an immediate ceasefire in accordance with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009). The European Union notes that the resolution we have just adopted does not contain explicit reference to the issue of illegal arms smuggling and underlines that for a sustainable solution, this issue will need to be addressed. The EU stands ready to contribute to efforts in that regard.

Mr. Wolff (United States of America): As we stated earlier today, the United States is deeply concerned about the situation in Gaza and southern Israel. This is a very serious matter, which is now best dealt with through active diplomatic efforts on the ground, including the Egyptian initiative.

The basic elements for a durable ceasefire have been laid out. The United Nations has spoken through Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), and the Secretary-General is in the region right now, working to find a solution and ensure the resolution's implementation.

Other initiatives that complement and support these efforts are in play as well, including the memorandum of understanding regarding the prevention of the supply of arms and related materials to terrorist groups, signed today in Washington, D.C., between the United States and Israel. That is an effort to end the direct cause of the current hostilities: the flow of weapons and explosives into Gaza.

A separate General Assembly resolution is neither necessary nor helpful — and certainly not an unbalanced one that is silent on the issue of Hamas rocket attacks. All efforts should be focused on the real work of implementing Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) in the region, so that we can then turn again back to the goals of Security Council resolution 1850 (2008) — that is, a lasting peace based on an enduring commitment to mutual recognition, freedom from violence, incitement and terror and the two-State solution, building upon previous agreements and obligations.

Mr. Ja'afari (Syrian Arab Republic): Allow me, first of all, Mr. President, to commend your noble efforts and your noble mission. I think you have conducted our tough deliberations with a very strong faith in justice. If there is a mistake in the outcome of our deliberations, it is not yours.

I think that the main reason for calling for and convening the resumption of this urgent session was that we wanted to handle the paralysis created by the Security Council in dealing with the suffering of the Palestinian people. Unfortunately, here we are, deforming the purpose of the convocation of this session. Here we are, repeating the same inertia from which the Security Council suffers. The Council adopted its resolution 1860 (2009) without providing it with any teeth or any mechanism of enforcement.

The majority that voted in favour of today's draft resolution is not the one that the Palestinian people in Gaza need. This majority is not the one that the representative of Palestine called for before we proceeded to the vote. This majority is not the one we were all aspiring to get after these tough deliberations, wishing to render service — a minor service — to the Palestinian people suffering in Gaza from the aggressive Israeli bloodshed.

The sponsors of the draft resolution were acting on the basis of good faith when they decided to go back to the plenary and bow to your request, Mr. President, that we find a compromise for the sake of helping the Palestinian people. Unfortunately, we found ourselves before the machinery of procedural manipulation, and the masters of that machinery were not acting, as we were, on the basis of good faith.

All of that resulted in a vote on something related to the suffering of the Palestinian people. That is not what the Palestinian people in Gaza were waiting for. That is not rendering a service to the Palestinian people in Gaza. That is precisely serving the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people in Gaza. We have just deformed the meaningful concept of the Charter — what we call "international legitimacy".

The representative of Israel has shamefully criticized the resolution minutes after its adoption. Everyone here heard what that representative said. Some people may think that they achieved a victory tonight. This victory is not good for the Palestinian people in Gaza. This victory is a repetition of the paralysis of the Security Council, which runs against the main conception of holding our session.

Those who voted in favour of this important resolution have done so thinking that they would render a service and that they would be able to stop this aggressive Israeli machinery. But they have not done so, I am sorry to say. Lamentably, Israel will neglect and duck this resolution, as they have always done. You, my colleagues, have given them just enough time to finish their dirty job against the Palestinian people in Gaza.

My delegation was led, in spite of itself, to abstain from voting on a draft resolution that we think is incapable by nature of helping the Palestinian people in Gaza, the Palestinian people who need real help from us, real assistance — not literature, not poetry.

Ms. Espinosa (Ecuador) (*spoke in Spanish*): First, allow me to thank you, Mr. President, for your patience, for your commitment and for your guidance and direction in this complex process. I agree with my colleague from Syria that acting in good faith sometimes seems not to produce anything in this Organization.

I would like to explain the vote of Ecuador. We abstained in the voting on this resolution. That seems to go against the statement I made this morning on behalf of the Government and the people of Ecuador in this very room. Why did we abstain? We abstained simply because we cannot understand how the States Members of the United Nations could not agree with the immediate withdrawal of Israeli military forces from the territory of Gaza.

We are also truly surprised by the third preambular paragraph of the draft resolution that we have just massively approved. In the third preambular paragraph, we are putting the Israeli victims — eight or nine in number, perhaps — on the same level as the Palestinian victims, who number more than 5,000 dead and wounded, most of them, we know, civilians, women and children — innocent victims. That is what the third preambular paragraph says, and a majority of us in this room have just voted for it.

Since procedural formulas seemed to be used as a shelter, I agree with a colleague who spoke before me about the problem of procedure. The representatives of Egypt and the European Union indicated that the proposal we voted on this afternoon was virtually identical to the original proposal presented, so procedure would have called for voting paragraph by paragraph. I do not know what would have happened if the Members of this Organization had had to vote on the third preambular paragraph.

My delegation would have liked votes on the paragraphs that were amendments in this draft resolution that was almost identical to the original text. I simply want to make this comment and place on record the issue of procedure.

I would finally like to recall that, the people of Ecuador are here, and it took the position it took this afternoon because one essential thing matters to us: the well-being and the preservation of the lives of the Palestinian people. We regret having had to abstain, because everybody knows the position of my Government, my country and my people.

Now that I have made that clear, Mr. President, I would like to thank you once again for your patience, guidance and direction, and I would like to regret once again, as I said, that after my delegation acted in good faith, trying to return to the original proposal, that was absolutely ignored by the other side. I regret that, and I reaffirm our unconditional solidarity with the Palestinian people.

Mr. Hill (Australia): I wanted to take the floor in explanation of vote, as we abstained. I would explain that that abstention should not be misinterpreted.

We strongly support the call in Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) for an immediate, durable and fully respected ceasefire. We recognize that this conflict is profoundly affecting civilians and that it is vital that diplomatic efforts to find a resolution that effects a durable ceasefire succeed, and succeed very soon. We believe that all parties should avoid actions that could result in unnecessary or increased suffering on the part of innocent civilians.

While we believe that the draft resolution that we voted upon was an improvement upon that which was circulated yesterday, we still did not believe in the end that it went far enough, because to achieve a durable, sustainable ceasefire, actions need to be taken that do not appear in the document that we voted upon. In particular, to achieve that sustainable ceasefire, rocket attacks against Israel must cease, and the smuggling of arms into Gaza also must end.

If that had been included, and if we were genuinely seeking to take the debate one step beyond that which we have had to date in looking at what is necessary to achieve that longer-term and durable ceasefire, we would have been able to support the resolution.

In conclusion, I also wanted to say that we are disturbed by the suggestions of some in this debate that through this debate success will be achieved in isolating Israel. Isolating Israel is not a path to peace. Peace must be made between the parties. Our efforts must be to bring the parties together to achieve that peace.

This conflict has demonstrated once again the vital need for a two-State solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Australia remains strongly committed to that objective and urges all efforts towards it.

Mr. Natalegawa (Indonesia): The Palestinian cause is an Indonesian cause as well. In fact, for many Indonesians, myself included, to be Indonesian is to be Palestinian. Therefore it is with an extremely heavy heart that today, probably for the first time, Indonesia has not been able to join the consensus and has not been able to support a General Assembly resolution on this issue. Our universal Assembly has historically always supported the Palestinian cause, and Indonesia has never failed to either sponsor or initiate such resolutions and, of course, to support the Palestinian cause.

It becomes even more galling for us to find ourselves in a situation where we are not able to support this resolution because Indonesia was one of the main proponents for the convening of this emergency special session. Therefore we feel it is incumbent upon us to explain in some way why we find ourselves in this situation of not being able to support the resolution that has just been adopted, and therefore to most clearly express our support for our Palestinian brothers and sisters.

There are moments when we here, working in the United Nations and the General Assembly, have to place our moral conscience above anything else. We have seen your draft resolution, Sir, and we stated on the first day of our debate that we need more than simple reaffirmations of existing Security Council resolutions. Rather, we must build on Council resolutions. However, out of our greatest respect for the presidency of the Assembly, we resisted the temptation to add to the resolution in a way that would make it easier for us to be able to support it. We did so out of our respect for the presidency and our wish to have a consensus.

However, at a late hour, we were presented with certain amendments, which, I fully understand, had been worked out extremely diligently by our friends and brothers in the European Union. But with the greatest humility and the greatest conscience, my delegation would have tremendous difficulty explaining — not to ourselves or to our colleagues in this room, but to our people back home — how it is that we are not able, as the Assembly — not the Security Council, but the Assembly of 190-odd Member States — to explicitly say to Israel, the occupying Power: enough is enough, end your violence and leave Gaza now.

That is why we are troubled by this amendment to your text, Sir. In the third preambular paragraph of the new text in L.21/Rev.1, we find ourselves, the General Assembly, incapable of even identifying who the main perpetrator of this whole situation is, namely Israel. Of course, every life lost is one life too many. It goes without saying that one civilian life is not more important than another civilian life. We condemn and feel saddened by every civilian life lost, whether Palestinian or Israeli. But to suggest that there is some kind of parity — that, we find difficult to accept, with the greatest humility.

I know that we in this Assembly always seek balance and compromise, but there are moments — and this is one such moment — in which we find ourselves unable to have that kind of conscience. We felt that tonight was the time for us to say loud and clear: as our colleague has said, this is not the Security Council; this is the General Assembly of the United Nations.

As a democratic nation, we are accountable to our public back home, not simply in this room. We can say that we are not able to support this resolution, not because we are not in support of Palestine. On the contrary, we are so fully 110 per cent in support of Palestine that we feel that this resolution does not go far enough in condemning Israel and demanding that Israel immediately withdraw from occupied Palestinian territory. That is why I would like to make it absolutely clear that, in fact, by abstaining today, we are showing more than ever before that our solidarity is 110 per cent and totally with the Palestinian people and with the suffering that they are going through, and that we demand not a day too soon that the Israelis withdraw from the Gaza Strip and end the carnage now.

Mr. Loayza Barea (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): First of all, Mr. President, I would like to express, on behalf of my delegation, our respect for your commitment to the cause of the Palestinian people. We have listened to your vehement call at the reconvening of this session of the General Assembly. When we became aware of the text of the draft resolution that you submitted to the members, we made it clear in several statements that this text unequivocally reflected the sentiments of the international community.

Of course, Bolivia would have supported the proposal made by Ecuador, with the revision included, because it definitely enriched the text and made it

effectively call for the occupying Power to withdraw immediately from the Gaza Strip.

In any case, a resolution has been adopted. Bolivia voted in favour of it not because of issues reflected or that are the result of a procedural matter, which I hope we will all be able to understand someday, especially those who are suffering the most at this time. We voted for it because we believe that the cause of peace comes first, before any other consideration and because the Assembly has the unavoidable duty to speak out as many times as may be necessary. We believe that this resolution should not be interpreted as something that will not open the way for other resolutions. On the contrary, we believe that ground has been broken and that steps are being taken towards greater prospects.

We wish to express in particular, with absolute clarity, our condemnation of the aggressor Power. We have therefore broken off diplomatic relations with it. Above all, we wish to reiterate our greatest solidarity with the cause of the Palestinian people.

Mr. Urbina (Costa Rica) (*spoke in Spanish*): Costa Rica voted in favour of resolution ES-10/18 adopted by the General Assembly this evening. Costa Rica voted in favour because we believe that it responds to the most urgent aspects of the dire situation in the Gaza Strip. However, we regret the fact that the text does not mention Hamas's share of responsibility in the deterioration of the political situation and crisis in Gaza. We also sought an explicit condemnation of acts of terrorism perpetrated for some time by some Palestinian extremists against the territory and civilian population of Israel.

Costa Rica has already established diplomatic relations with the Palestinian State, which has the right to exist and live in peace side by side with Israel within internationally recognized borders.

Mr. Valero Briceño (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): We would like to specify that our delegation abstained from voting on the proposal submitted by the Egyptian delegation for only one reason, or more specifically, for one fundamental reason. We would have liked for the text of the resolution to specifically condemn, as did the proposal submitted by the Ecuadorian delegation, the Israeli occupation of the territory of Gaza, and to demand, in line with our beliefs and the appeals of the international community, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip. My country, Venezuela, believed that this point could have been accepted at least by the large majority of delegations from Arab countries.

I have in my hands a cable, a news wire issued in Qatar by the news agency Al-Jazeera, which records a meeting held yesterday by the high authorities of countries of the Arab League. According to the wire, that major high-level meeting, which was even attended by Heads of State, approved, "a strong condemnation of Israel, and calls on Israel to withdraw from the Gaza Strip".

Venezuela believed in good faith that this matter would be welcomed by most delegations represented in this forum. We were convinced, as a matter of fact, that only Israel, the occupying Power, and its closest allies would object to it. It seemed unthinkable, however, that delegations of countries of the Arab League could disagree with the fact that we had to call for an immediate withdrawal of Israel from the occupied Palestinian territories.

We do not understand — and it pains me to say this — why that demand, which, I repeat, was overwhelmingly supported by the international community, especially the Arab-Islamic world, was not adopted by the majority of members at this meeting. Given those circumstances, my delegation reiterates its unwavering support for the Palestinian people, their self-determination and their will to attain a free, independent and sovereign country guided by self-determination. You can be certain, Mr. President, that Venezuela will continue to act in solidarity with the Palestinian people and its cause, which is also the cause of the people of Venezuela.

For that very reason, although we would have liked the draft resolution submitted by the Ecuadorian delegation to address other matters, we think the document submitted by our President, who deserves our deepest respect, essentially reflected the majority sentiment in this forum. The only amendment, presented by the Ecuadorian delegation with the support and sponsorship of Venezuela, among others, was the demand that the occupying Power, Israel, withdraw immediately from the Gaza Strip. Resolution ES-10/18 does not address that issue, which we feel to be essential because it will not be possible to attain lasting peace in the Middle East while the occupying Power remains entrenched and committing its crimes

of genocide and against humanity. Therefore, and with great pain, we abstained for the reasons just mentioned.

We are certain that the Palestinian people, the Arab peoples and the peoples of the world share the sentiment that the occupying Power, Israel, must withdraw from the Gaza Strip. In that regard, we reiterate that the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela abstained from supporting the resolution for the above reasons alone.

The President: Before proceeding further, I would like to announce that those delegations whose votes have not been accurately reflected on the board are now invited to approach the Secretariat at the voting table to inform it of their intended vote.

We are about to close the list of speakers now.

Mr. Belkheir (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): We pay tribute to your humanity and your nobility, Mr. President, as well as to your efforts to support the just cause of people who have been killed and had their land occupied. We have felt that sentiment fully reflected, Sir, in your statements and in your very courageous stand and your voice, which has been resounding since the first day.

My country voted in favour of resolution ES-10/18. However, we would have liked to see it more firm and more in line with the disaster on the ground and the killing of the Palestinian people in Gaza. However, we realize that it is difficult to do more than that while maintaining the equilibrium of the international order within the Organization. We are aware of that fact. Nonetheless, this minimal resolution is acceptable to my country.

Ms. Ziade (Lebanon) (*spoke in Arabic*): We express our deep appreciation for the efforts you have personally undertaken, Mr. President, to encourage the General Assembly to adopt resolution ES-10/18 in order to express solidarity with the Palestinian people and to condemn the illegal Israeli actions in the Gaza Strip, particularly and more generally on Palestinian occupied lands.

Like many other delegations, we would have preferred more robust language condemning the Israeli aggression in the Gaza Strip and calling for an unconditional withdrawal by Israel from the Gaza Strip. However, in response to the appeal made by the brotherly Palestinian delegation, we chose to vote in favour of the resolution. We did so because it was supported by the greatest possible number of Member States and in order to ensure that it would accompany the diplomatic efforts and initiatives under way in the region to achieve an immediate ceasefire and an immediate and unconditional withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza.

Mr. Abdelaziz (Egypt): I requested the floor to express to you, Mr. President, our sincere appreciation and thanks for your swift action after Israel launched its aggression against Gaza. Your decision to reconvene the tenth emergency special session at the end of last week — perhaps on the very day that Security Council resolution 1860 (2009) was adopted — greatly facilitated the adoption of that resolution. Your tireless efforts also resulted in the draft resolution that we, the representative of Palestine and all other representatives here used as a basis for the resolution that we have adopted today.

In that regard, I would also like to thank all those who voted in favour of the resolution and even those who abstained, and to express my sincere appreciation for my neighbour the representative of Ecuador and the other sponsors. All of us are in the same boat and have had the same goal. This resolution is not a victory by some over others; it is a victory for all of us.

I would just like to address a number of points that have been made about the resolution. With regard to the third preambular paragraph, it is very clear in expressing grave concern about the developments on the ground since the adoption of resolution 1860 (2009). In no way does it equate the aggressor and the victims, because it states, "especially following the intensified military operations in the Gaza Strip" — which are not intensified military operations carried out by the Palestinian people against themselves in the Gaza Strip — "causing heavy casualties among civilians, including children and women" — and here comes a very important issue — "and the shelling of United Nations headquarters, hospitals, media premises and public infrastructure". The Palestinians did not shell hospitals, media premises or United Nations headquarters. It is quite clear from the language of the resolution exactly who is being addressed. The last sentence of this paragraph, which comes from resolution 1860 (2009) itself, had to be preserved in order to maintain the required balance.

Those who say we are opposed to the withdrawal of the forces from Gaza should look at operative

paragraph 1, which uses the word "demands". The Security Council resolution uses the phrase "stresses the urgency of and calls for". Demanding something is very different from calling for something.

In that connection, what is being called for is a ceasefire. In order to reach the stage of a full withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip, we must first have a ceasefire. How can we ask forces to withdraw if we do not have a ceasefire? We are working on many fronts in that regard. As everyone here is aware, Egypt is working tirelessly day and night on negotiations between the two sides, and we are getting very close. I am sure that this will be followed by a withdrawal of forces from Gaza.

Egypt, like many Heads of State and Government of the Arab world, did not attend the conference held for leaders yesterday, because there was no quorum for the meeting. However, it was attended by other leaders from outside the Arab world and even by the representatives of some factions. I have not committed myself to any statement arising from that meeting, because I did not attend it. It was a very important meeting attended by very distinguished persons; but we were not a party to it. So I regret to respond to my colleague and friend the representative of Venezuela that what took place yesterday was not an Arab summit conference, but side consultations among Heads of State and Government, eminent personalities, a number of others from outside the Arab world and representatives of factions of the Palestinian people known to all those here. They were consultations on what is to be done.

Therefore, let us concentrate on what needs to be done on the ground. The issue here is not whether to adopt a resolution by the Security Council or the General Assembly. Let us concentrate on regional and international efforts to put everything in perspective and achieve a ceasefire first and then, immediately after that, a withdrawal.

The President: I know we are all tired. I thank everyone for sticking it out. But I also would be less than frank if I did not say that, in addition to being very tired, I am very sad and disappointed. We are in far worse shape than I thought. Our brother from Egypt said we are all in the same boat, and that is for sure. We are all in the same boat, but we will never make it if we do not act in a more decisive and affirmative manner.

In accordance with the terms of paragraph 6 of resolution ES-10/18, the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly is adjourned.

The meeting rose at 9.50 p.m.